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FM AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9064
INFO RUCNSOM/SOMALIA COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHMFIUU/CJTF HOA IMMEDIATE
RUZEFAA/CDR USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE IMMEDIATE
RUZEFAA/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE IMMEDIATE
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 NAIROBI 000662

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/E AND ACTING A/S CARTER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [EAID](#) [PHUM](#) [KPAO](#) [SO](#)

SUBJECT: SOMALIA - TOUGH MONTH FOR JOURNALISTS

REF: NAIROBI 645

11. (SBU) Summary: Somali journalists encountered more problems in the second half of March, with new arrests in Somaliland and Puntland. The Puntland arrest has resulted in a long jail sentence. Embassy has registered its concern in the Puntland case with recently-elected President Farooole. End summary.

A Release, but No Clarity
on the Initial Arrest

12. (SBU) On March 20, Yool newspaper editor Mohamed Abdi Guled, also known as Urad, was released nearly a month after his February 26 arrest in Somaliland. Guled had been sentenced on March 17 to five months in prison on charges of operating an unregistered newspaper and publishing fabricated information. However, local colleagues speculated that he had actually been arrested for publishing reports, presumably embarrassing to the government, of alleged plots to murder parliamentarians, opposition leaders and traditional elders. Reporters Without Borders reported that Guled's supporters paid a "bail" of 1 million Somaliland shillings (530 Euros) to secure his release (Note: we are working to clarify if this "bail" is a fine and closes the case, or if the money is in fact a bail payment and Guled faces more court proceedings.)

Arrest and Sentencing in Puntland

13. (SBU) Jama Ayanle Feyte, a freelance reporter associated with the Somali websites laasqorey.net and daynille.com, was arrested on March 26 in Bossaso, Puntland, for allegedly publishing false information. International and Somail journalist organizations including Reporters Without Borders, the Somalia Coalition for Freedom of Expression (SOCFEX), and the National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ) have stated that Abdullahi Jama Ilkajir, who ran for and lost the race for President of Puntland and was appointed Minister of Interior in January 2009, was behind the charges and that he had appeared in court to testify against Feyte. The organizations speculated that the charges stemmed from Feyte's writings about regional authorities. One contact in Bossaso told us that Feyte's arrest is rumored to have stemmed from Feyte's publishing an article alleging that Puntland President Farooole was planning to set up government TV and radio stations, and then appoint his own son to run

them. The contact speculated that Ilkajir charged Feyte on behalf of Farole. On March 31, Feyte was sentenced to two years in prison after a trial in which Feyte was reportedly not allowed legal representation. One source told us that another journalist, Abdiqani Hassan Dagjar, who was arrested with Feyte, was released for lack of evidence in his case.

14. (SBU) In an April 3 telephone conversation, Somalia Unit Counselor raised the Feyte case with President Farole, who insisted that Feyte was guilty of "misinformation," and disseminating information that jeopardized the "peace and stability" of Puntland. We told Farole that, based on the information we had, the charges and sentence seemed unwarranted. We urged that the case be re-examined, and promised that it would be discussed during the President's planned, April 14 visit to Nairobi.

Arrest in Somaliland

15. (SBU) Ahmed Suleiman Dhuhul, a producer for Horyaal Radio and member of the executive committee of the Somaliland Journalists Association (SOLJA), was arrested after he appeared at a meeting of Somaliland's Guurti (House of Elders) at which they debated the extension of the terms of Somaliland's President and Vice President (reftel). Both SOLJA and SOCFEX have alleged that Somaliland police beat Dhuhul at the scene of his arrest, and his injuries remain untreated. A SOCFEX press release alleged that Somaliland Police Commissioner Mohamed Dubad Saqadhi was present when

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Dhuhul was beaten. Dhuhul remains in detention in Hargeisa.

Press Freedom in
Somaliland and Puntland

16. (SBU) Threats against journalists in Somalia have been widely documented and Post has reported on major incidents in the past. However, the concerns reported here mark a turn for the worse in the treatment of journalists, especially in Puntland. The Feyte verdict is a bad beginning for press freedom on the watch of recently-elected Puntland President Farole.
RANNEBERGER